

نصف شعبان



Nisfu-sh-Sha'ban & The Fast of Sha'ban

notes for a talk given at the East End Masjid
Richmond, Virginia

by

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2012/1433



وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ

WA LA-DhIKRU-LLĀHI AKBAR

and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest!
(Sūrah al-Aʿnabūt 29:45)



2012/1433

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

• حَمْر • وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ •

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ ؕ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِينَ

• فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ • أَمْرًا مِنْ عِنْدِنَا ؕ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ •

رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ ؕ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

ḥā mīīm • wa-l-kitābi-l-mubīn •

°inna °anzalnāhu fī laylatin mubārakah ; °innā kunnā muñdhirīn •

fihā yufruqu kullū °amrin ḥakīm • °amram-min °indina;

°inna kunnā mursilīn •

rahmatam-mir-rabbik ; °innahu huwa-s-samī°u-l-°alīm •

“Ḥā Mīīm • By the Clear Book.

Surely We revealed it in a night [that is] blessed;

truly We are always warning [the people].

In it every wise order is made distinct

[as] a command from Our Presence.

Truly We are always sending messages as Mercy from Your Lord.

Surely He is All Hearing, Knowing.”

(ad-Dukḥān 44:1-6)



Sha°bān is the name of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, and it is so called because in this month the Arabs used to disperse (*tasha°aba*) in search of water, or it was said that it is so called because it branches out or emerges (*sha°aba*) between the months of Rajab and Ramaḍān.

In a ḥadīth Hazrat Usāma ؓ reports that the Prophet ﷺ said, “There is a month between Rajab and Ramaḍān called Sha°bān. People are ignorant about this month, even though the reward of each deed within it is greater [than other months], and one’s deeds are presented to Allāh ﷻ.” (Bayhaqi in *Kitāb Shuab-ul-Imān*).

al-Daylami al-Yamani also reported ؓ that the Messenger ﷺ said, “Sha°bān is my month.”

Hazrat Anās رضي الله عنه narrated that upon the arrival of the month of Rajab the Prophet ﷺ used to pray, “O Allāh! Bless us abundantly in Rajab and Sha‘bān and deliver us safely to Ramaḍān.”

In another hadith, ‘Ā‘ishah رضي الله عنها narrates that the Prophet ﷺ liked to observe the fasting in Sha‘bān and connected it with the fast of Ramaḍān. And she رضي الله عنها also said, “The Messenger ﷺ used to fast until we thought he would never break his fast, and not fast until we thought he would never fast. I never saw the Messenger ﷺ fasting for an entire month except in Ramaḍān, and I never saw him fast more than he did in Sha‘bān.” (Narrated by both al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Usamah ibn Zayd رضي الله عنه said: “I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I do not see you fasting in any other month like you fast in Sha‘bān.’ He said, ‘That is a month to which people do not pay attention, between Rajab and Ramaḍān, and it is a month in which deeds are lifted up to the Lord of the Worlds. I like for my deeds to be lifted up when I am fasting.’” (Narrated by al-Nasa’i).

When Sha‘bān began, if the Prophet ﷺ still had some voluntary fasts outstanding that he had not fasted, he would make them up during Sha‘bān so that all of his supererogatory (*nafl*) fasts would be complete before Ramaḍān came. Similarly, if he had missed some Sunnah prayers or he had missed Qiyam al-Layl his night prayers (*Qiyamu-l-Layl*), he would make these up in Sha‘bān. ‘Ā‘ishah رضي الله عنها used to make the most of this opportunity to make up in the month of Sha‘bān any obligatory Ramaḍān fasts that she had missed because of menstruation.

We should also note here that anyone who has any missed fasts to make up has to make them up before the next Ramaḍān comes. It is not permissible to delay it until after the following Ramaḍān except in cases of necessity such as a valid excuse that continues between the two Ramaḍāns such as a chronic illness. Whoever is able to make them up before the second Ramaḍān and does not do so, has to make them up after the second Ramaḍān and in addition to that, he has to repent and to feed one poor person for each day that he missed. This is the view of Malik, al-Shafa’i and Aḥmad رحمهم الله.

Another benefit of fasting in Sha‘bān is that it is a kind of training for the Ramaḍān fast, in case a person finds it difficult to fast when Ramaḍān starts; if he fasts in Sha‘bān he will have gotten used to

fasting and he will feel stronger when Ramaḍān comes. Shaʿbān is like an introduction to Ramaḍān and it has some things in common with Ramaḍān, such as fasting, reciting Qurʾān and giving in charity. Salamah ibn Suḥayl رضي الله عنه used to say: “The month of Shaʿbān is the month of reciters (of the Qurʾān).” Ḥabīb ibn Abi Ṭḥabit رضي الله عنه used to say, when Shaʿbān came, “This is the month of reciters (of the Qurʾān).” When Shaʿbān came, ʿAmr ibn Qays al-Malaʿi رضي الله عنه used to close his store and devote his time to reading the Qurʾān.

In another ḥadīth our beloved Prophet ﷺ has said: “When the blessed month of Shaʿbān reaches you, it cleanses your spirit to receive the blessed month of Ramaḍān. Purify your intentions, surely the greatness of Shaʿbān is like my greatness over all Prophets عليهم السلام. Be mindful, Shaʿbān is my month and anyone who keeps fast in it, my intercession will be *wajib* for him.” One should fast on the 13th 14th & 15th of Shaʿbān; if not on all three. then fast only on the 15th Shaʿbān.

[Please note that while most all of the above Aḥadīth are (*ṣaḥīḥ/صحيح*) some are considered weak (*ḍaʿīf/ضعيف*) either due to discontinuity in the chain of narrators or to some criticism of a narrator and are therefore not actionable. These fasts are thus supererogatory (*nafl/نفل*) but are undoubtably deserving of reward (*ʿajr/اجر*).]

That aside all of these reports however do indicate that fasting in the month of Shaʿbān, though not obligatory, is so meritorious that the Prophet ﷺ did not like to miss the opportunity to fast in it.

Concealing of one's good works, and hiding and concealing supererogatory (*nawafil*) actions is better, especially fasting, because it is a secret between a slave and his Lord ﷻ. It is said that there is no good in showing off in fasting. One of the Salaf used to fast for years without anybody knowing about it; he would go from his home to the marketplace carrying two loaves of bread, which he would give away in charity, and he would fast.

The majority of traditional Muslims (*ʿahl-e-sunnah wa jamʿah*) believe that in this blessed month of Shaʿbān, Allāh ﷻ lists the names of the people who are to die within the year. This is one of the beliefs that is centered around the excellence of the middle of Shaʿbān which is called either Shab-e-Baraʿat or Nişfu Shaʿbān, and it to this night that most of this paper will be devoted.

Let us begin then with this Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth for the 15th of Ṣha^cbān.

The Mother of the believers, ʿĀʾiṣḥa ؓ, says, “I missed the Prophet ؓ one night so I went out to al-Baqi’ (the graveyard, near to his Masjid) and found him. He said: “Were you afraid that Allāh ﷻ would wrong you?” I said: “O Messenger of Allah, I thought that you might have gone to visit one of your [other] wives.” He said: “Allāh Glorious and Exalted is He descends to the nearest heaven on the night of mid-Ṣha^cbān (15th night) and He forgives more people than the number of hair on the hides of the flocks and herds of sheep of the tribe of Kalb.” (Tirmidhī).

It is recorded in books that the tribe of Kalb used to have the greatest number of sheep in Arabia, but some unfortunate people are still not forgiven on this night when Allāh ﷻ showers His mercy on humanity. Amongst them are 1) those who are habitual drinkers [alcoholics], 2) those who are habitual adulterers, 3) those who are disobedient to their parents, 4) those who break family ties, 5) those who are mischief-spreaders and, 6) those who are back-biters. In another narration (*Mukashḥifatu-l-Qulūb*) mischief-spreader (*fitnawī*) is replaced with those who make pictures. In other narrations those who practice magic, those who eat interest (*riba*°), those who lower their pants or robes below their ankles with pride, those who start a fight between two Muslims, those who bear malice (have hatred for another Muslim) in their hearts without a lawful cause are also not forgiven on this blessed night unless they repent sincerely and also ask for forgiveness from fellow Muslims whom they have wronged and make peace. [note: this very last part is considered to be weak]



Now we will begin by talking about the Prayer of Niṣfu-Ṣha^cbān.

It is recorded from the Friends of Allah (*awliya-llāh karām* ؓ) to pray 6 cycles of ritual prayer (ركعة, pl. ركعات) after the Maḡhrib prayer. In the first two rak^eah, add to the intention that with its blessing extend life with harmony. In the next two for the protection from misfortunes and evil, and in the next two, that Allāh ﷻ make us dependant on Him and no one else. After every two cycles (*raka^ctayn*) recite Sūratu-l-ʾIkhlāṣ 21 times or Sūrah Yā Sīn once. If possible read both for greater rewards, and then recite the du^cā° of Niṣfu ṣha^cbān also known as *ṣḥabay barāt ki du^cā°*.

دعاء ليلة النصف من شهر شعبان



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اللهم يا ذا المن لا يمن عليه احد

يا ذا الجلال والإكرام يا ذا الطول والأنعام،

لا إله إلا أنتَ ظهر اللاجئين

وجار المستجيرين وامن الخائفين

اللهم ان كنت كتبتني عندك في امر الكتاب

شقيا أو محروما أو مطرودا أو مقترا عليّ من الرزق

فامح اللهم بفضلك شقاوتي وحرمانني وطردني

واقترار رزقي وثبتني عندك في امر الكتاب

سعيدا ومرزوقا للخيرات فانك قلت وقولك الحق في كتابك المنزل

على لسان نبيك المرسل يمحو الله ما يشاء ويثبت وعنده امر

الكتاب. إلهي بالتجلي الأعظم في ليلة النصف من شهر شعبان

المعظم المكرم التي يفرق فيها كل امر حكيم ويبرم

ان تكشف عنا من البلاء ما نعلم وما لا نعلم وما أنتَ به اعلم

إنكَ أنتَ الأعز الأكرم.

وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم.



allāhumma yā dhā-l-manni lā yamannu °alayhi °aḥad,
 yā dhā-l-jalāli wa l-°ikrām yā dhā-t-tūli wa-l-an°ām.
 lāā °ilāha °illa °aṅta. ḍḥahara-l-lāji°in
 wa jāru-l-mustajirīn wa āmānu-l-kḥā°ifīn.
 allāhumma in kuṅta katabtanī °indaka fī ummu-l-kitābi
 shaqīyan aw maḥrūman aw maṭrūdan
 aw muqataran `alayya mina-r-rizq
 famḥu-llāhumma bi-faḍlika shaqāwatī wa ḥurmāni wa ṭurḍī
 wa °iqṭāra rizqī wa ṭḥabitnī °indaka fī ummi-l-kitābi
 sa°īdan wa marzūqan li-l-kḥayrātī.
 fa-innaka qulta wa qawluku-l-ḥaqq fī kitābika-l-munzal
 °ala lisāni nabīyyika-l-mursal:
 yamḥullāhu mā yashā°u wa yuṭḥbitu wa °indahu ummu-l-kitāb.
 °ilahī bi-t-tajallī al-ā°aḍḥami fī laylati-n-niṣfu min ṣḥahri ṣḥa°bāni-l-
 mu°aḍḥami-l-mukarrami
 °allatī yufraqu fihā kullu amrin ḥakīmin wa yubram,
 an takṣḥifa °annā mina-l-balā°i mā na°lamu wa mā lā na°lamu
 wa mā aṅta bihi °ā°alamu
 °innaka °aṅta al-°a°azzu-l-°akram.
 wa ṣalla-allāhu °alā sayyidinā muḥammadin
 wa °alā °alihi wa ṣabbihi wa sallam



Oh Allāh, Tireless Owner of Bounty.
 Oh Owner of Sublimity, Honor, Power, and Blessings.
 There is no Allāh except You, the Support of refugees
 and Neighbor of those who seek nearness, Guardian of the fearful.
 Oh Allāh, if you have written in the Mother of the Book
 that I be abject, deprived, banished, and tight-fisted,
 then erase Oh Allāh, through Your bounty,
 my misery, deprivation, banishment, and stinginess,
 and establish me with You as happy [and] provided with blessings,
 for surely You have said—and Your Word is True—
 in Your Revealed Book on the tongue of Your Messenger,
 “Allāh effaces or establishes what He wills,
 And with Him is the Mother of Books.” (13:39)
 My Allāh, by the Great Manifestation of the Night
 of the middle of the Noble Month of Sha°bān
 “in which every affair of wisdom is made distinct “ (44:4)
 remove from us calamities
 — those we know and those we do not know —
 — and You know best —
 for surely You are the Most Mighty, the Most Generous.
 May Allāh bless Muḥammad and his Family and Companions.



Again one's intention when reading Sūrah Yā Sīn each of three times should be as follows:

- 1) the intention of long life in Islām and faith (°imān);
- 2) the intention to ward off affliction from one's self and from the nation of our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ;
- 3) the intention of receiving one's sustenance (rizq) without reliance on people.

Spend the night, as much as possible, in worship and fast on the 15th of Sha°bān. Since the book of deeds is changed on the 15th night, if it is possible, also fast on the 14th so that the last day of the yearly deeds registered in one's book for that year is spent fasting and the first day is also spent fasting.

Ummu-l-Mu°minīn, °Ā°ishā ؓ is reported to have said, "The Prophet stood up in prayer during part of the night and made his prostration so lengthy that I thought his soul had been taken back. When I saw this I got up and went to move his big toe, whereupon he moved, so I drew back. When he raised his head from prostration and finished praying, he said: "Oh °Ā°ishā, Oh fair little one (*humayra*°)! Did you think that the Prophet had broken his agreement with you?" She replied: "No, by Allāh, O Messenger of Allāh, but I thought that your soul had been taken back because your stayed in prostration for so long." He said: "Do you know what night this is?" She said: "Allāh and His Prophet know best." He said: "This is the night of mid-Sha°bān! Verily Allāh the Glorious and Majestic looks at His servants on the night of mid-Sha°bān, and He forgives those who ask forgiveness, and He bestows mercy on those who ask mercy, and He gives a delay to the people of envy and spite in their state." Narrated from °Ā°ishā by Aḥmad, Ibn Majah, and at-Tirmidhī, who said that he heard al-Bukharī say this ḥadīth was weak (ضعيف) because some of the sub-narrators did not narrate directly from each other. Also narrated from °Ā°ishā by al-Bayhaqī in *Shu°ab al-°Imān* (3:382) where he comments: "This ḥadīth is missing a Companion in its chain, and is a good ḥadīth (*hadḥa mursal jayyid*). It is probable that al-Ala°ibn al-Harīth took it from Makḥul and Allāh ﷺ knows best." May Allāh ﷻ forgive us all and may we all be among the dwellers of the Garden. Amīn.

Concerning the night of mid-Sha[°]bān, Ibn Taymiyya wrote:

“[Some] said there is no difference between this and other nights of the year. However, the opinion of many of the people of learning and that of the majority of our [Hanbalī] colleagues and other than them, is that it is a night of superior merit, and this is what is indicated by the words of Aḥmad [ibn Hanbal], in view of the many aḥādīth transmitted about it and in light of what confirms this in the words and deeds transmitted from the early generations (*al-athar al-salafiyya*). Some of its merits have been transmitted in the books of Ḥadīth of the types Musnad and Sunnan. This holds true even if other things have been forged concerning it.” [Ibn Taymiyya *Iqtida al-Sirat al-Mustaqim* (1369/1950 ed. P 302) translation by Shaykh Gibril Haddad in his Sunnah Notes (Vol 1, p. 208)]

Similarly as-Suyyuti said:



“As for the night of mid-Sha[°]bān it has great merit and it is desirable (*mustahab*) to spend part of it in supererogatory (*nafl*) worship.” [as-Suyyuti, *Haqiqat al-Sunna wal-Bida wa al-Amr bil-itiiba wal-Nahi an al-Ibtida*]



This night is also regarded highly by the Scholars of the Deoband:


Mawlanā Ashraf Ali Ṭhanvī writes “Its significance is this, that 15th night and 15th day of this month are very blessed ones. Prophet ﷺ, urged Muslims to stay up during the night and fast during the day. At this night the Prophet used to go to the graveyard of Madinah and prayed for the dead. Therefore, it is desirable that the Muslims should pray during that night and fast during the following day. They should also seek the forgiveness of their dead either by reciting the Qur[°]ān or by feeding the hungry or by giving the money in charity or by just praying for them.” [Ashraf Ali Ṭhanvī in his *Bahishti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments), part 6, pp 61-62]


Mufti Taqi Uṭhmani writes: “Another significant feature of the month of Sha[°]bān is that it consists of a night which is termed in *shari[°]ah* (شریعة) as ‘Laylatu-l-Bara[°]ah’ (The Night of Freedom from Fire). This is the night occurring between 14th and 15th day of Sha[°]bān. There are certain traditions of Prophet ﷺ to prove that it is a meritorious night in which the people of the earth are attended by special Divine mercy.”

These positions are based on the following evidence:

Mu^cadhī ibn Jabal  reports that the Prophet  said: “Allāh looks at his creation on the night of mid-Sha^cbān and He forgives all his creation except for the idolater and the one bent on hatred.” [Narrated by Ibn Hibban (12:481) with a sound chain according to al-Arna^ut and al-Hayṭhami, who said that Tabarani also narrated it in his *Kabir* and *ʿAwsat* with chains containing only trustworthy narrators, that is: sound (*ṣaḥīḥ/صَحِيح*) chains; Ibn Khuzayma included it in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which has the same level of acceptance among the experts as *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*]

ʿAlī ibn Abi Ṭalib  reports that the Prophet  is reported to have said: “The night of mid-Sha^cbān, let all of you spend in prayer and its day in fasting, for Allāh descends to the nearest heaven during that night beginning with sunset and says: ‘Is there no one asking sustenance that I may forgive them? Is there no one asking sustenance that I may grant them sustenance? Is there no one under duress that I may relieve them? Is there not such-and-such, is there not such-and-such, and so forth until dawn rises.’”

Narrated from Sayyidinā ʿAlī  by Aḥmād and Ibn Majah with a chain containing Ibn Abi Sabra. Mufti Taqī Uthmani says regarding the authenticity of this ḥadīth, “This ḥadīth is recorded by Ibn Majah in his *Sunan*, one of the famous six books of ḥadīth, and also by Bayhaqī in his famous book *Shu^ʿab-al-ʿImān*.”

[al-Kawthari commented: “The meaning of descent is His opening the gate of response to His servants, and this is true Arabic usage. As for explaining it as His displacement from top to bottom, it is ignorance of what is permissible and impermissible to apply to Allah . Therefore, one has to explain it metaphorically as the sending down of a herald sounding out this call, as indicated by al-Nasaⁱ’i’s narration; or, also metaphorically, as His ‘turning toward’ (*yuqbilu ʿalā*) those who ask forgiveness etc. as related from Hammad ibn Zayd and others. Also, sunset and the last third of the night differ in each region, so both go on according to each different region of the world. It cannot be imagined that a sensory descending is meant in all the various formulations of the hadith of descent.’]

Both of them have reported it without any comment about its authenticity. But after a critical analysis of its chain of narrators it is found that this tradition is mainly based on the report of Abu Bakr Ibn Abi Sabūrah whose narrations cannot be relied upon.

That is why the scholars of Ḥadīth have declared it as a weak (ḍaʿīf/ضَعِيف) tradition. Although the narration is weak, when other factors are considered, the validity of fasting on 15th Shāʿbān becomes established although it should not be deemed as a *sunnah*, rather it is desirable.

However, the allegation that the narrator of this ḥadīth i.e. Abu Bakr ibn Abi Saburah, is a fabricator who used to coin forged traditions does not seem correct. In fact, he was mufti of Madinah, a well-known jurist and he was appointed as a Judge (*qadī*) of al-Iraq in the days of Mansur and was succeeded in this office by Imām Abu Yūsuf. He also was a colleague of ʾImām Mālik.

Once Mansur, the Abbasi Kḥalīf, asked ʾImām Mālik and he referred to three names, one of which was that of Ibn Abi Saburah. Had he been a fabricator, ʾImām Mālik would have never referred to his name in this context.

But despite his high position among the jurists, his memory was not of the standard required for the authenticity of a tradition. That is why most of the critics of ḥadīth like ʾImām Bukḥari etc. have held him as weak, but did not declare him a fabricator. Only ʾImām Aḥmad is reported to have remarked about him that he fabricates ḥadīth. But this remark alone is not sufficient to hold him as a fabricator, for two reasons: Firstly ʾImām Aḥmad was born long after him, and his contemporary scholars never held him as such; secondly the Arabic words used by ʾImām Aḥmad are sometimes used for confusing one tradition with another, and not for deliberate fabrication.

Therefore, the correct position is that this ḥadīth is not fabricated.

However, being reported by a weak narrator, it cannot be relied upon in the matter of the injunctions of *shariʿah*. Thus, the fast of the 15th of Shāʿbān cannot be termed as *Sunnah* or *Mustahab* in the strict sense of the term. Nevertheless, it may be advisable to fast on the 15th of Shāʿbān without taking it as *Sunnah* for several reasons:

Firstly, as we have already noted, it is fully established through a large number of aḥādīth that the Prophet ﷺ has emphasized the merits of fasting in Shāʿbān, and particularly in the first half of the month. The 15th day of Shāʿbān, being the last day of the first half, is included in the preferable days for fasting.

Secondly, the merit of the 15th night of Sha^cbān is established by more than a dozen aḥādīth. It means that this night should be spent in prayer (ṣalāt) and other forms of ʿibadah. On the other hand, all the blessed nights which the Muslims are advised to spend in worship are usually followed by fasting on the coming day as Laylatu-l-Qadr, where fasting on the following day is obligatory, or the first night Dhi-l-Hijjah where fasting on the following days is optional, rather advisable. on this analogy, too, the 15th night of Sha^cbān may be followed by an optional fasting on the following day.

Thirdly, the tradition relating to the merits of fasting on 15th of Sha^cbān is, no doubt, a weak tradition but it can be acted upon as a measure of precaution, provided that the practice is not taken to be *sunnah* or a formal *mustahabb*.

It is for these many proofs and reasons that some ʿulamāʾ (علماء) and our pious elders have been fasting on the 15th of Sha^cbān for generations now and have been taking it as an advisable practice.

Among the Ṣūfīs (متصوف), the Ghawth, Shaykh ʿAbdul Qadir al-Gilanī (رحمته الله عليه), recommended the following practice for the Night of the Middle of Sha^cbān in his *Ghunya*:

“As for the ritual prayer traditional for the night of mid-Sha^cbān, it consists of one hundred cycles, including one thousand repetitions of “Qul Huwa Allāhu ʿAḥad” (قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ), which is to say, ten recitations in each *rakʿah* (ركعة) of “Qul Huwa Allāhu ʿAḥad”. This prayer is called *Ṣalātu-l-Khayr*, and its blessings are many and varied. Our predecessors used to gather to perform it in congregation (*jamʿah*). It contains much merit and rich reward. It is reported by al-Hasan al-Basri (رحمته الله عليه), that he said: “Thirty of the companions of the Messenger (ﷺ) related to me that Allāh (ﷻ) will look seventy times upon one who performs this prayer on this night, and with each glance He will fulfill seventy of that persons needs, the last of them being forgiveness.”

He (رحمته الله عليه) also remarked on the spelling of Sha^cbān, saying that the *shīn* (ش) stands for *sharaf* or nobility, that the ʿayn (ع) is for ʿuluww or sublimity, that *bāʾ* (ب) is for *birr* or piety, that ʿalif (ا) is for ʿulfa or harmonious intimacy and the *nūn* (ن) refers to radiant light or *nūr*.

It is from the Ghawth al-ʿAḍhīm, Shaykh ʿAbdul Qadir al-Gilanī (رحمته الله عليه) in his *Ghunya*, that we learn that ʿĀʾiṣḥā (عائشة), once said:

“When it was the night of mid-Sha‘bān, the Prophet ﷺ had removed a garment of mine.” Then she added, “By Allāh! That garment of mine was not of silk, nor of raw silk, nor of linen, nor of silk and wool, nor of wool.” [The reporter said:] “Glory be to Allāh!” I said to her, “So what was it made of?” She replied: “Its warp was of hair and its weft was of silk. I reckoned that he ﷺ might have gone to one of his [other] wives, so I got up and searched for him in the [darkness of the] apartment. My hand made contact with his feet, as he was prostrate in worship. Of his prayer ﷻ, I remember these words:

“Prostrated before You are my form and my spirit, and my heart is in Your safekeeping. I acknowledge Your favors, and to You I confess my sin. I have wronged myself, so forgive me.

“Surely no one forgives sins but You. I seek refuge with Your pardon from Your punishment, with Your mercy from Your vengeance, with Your approval from Your displeasure. I seek refuge with You from You. I do not tell Your praises, for You are as You have extolled Yourself.”

She continued: “So he did not cease from worship, now standing and now sitting [on his heels], until morning. Then he put his feet up, and as I massaged them I said: ‘My father be your ransom and my mother! Surely Allāh has forgiven your former and your latter sins? Surely Allāh has dealt with you? Is it not so? Is it not so?’

“He ﷺ replied: ‘Oh ‘Ā’ishā, shall I not be a grateful servant? Do you know what happens during this night?’ ‘What happens?’ I asked, and he ﷺ said: ‘This is when all births are recorded for this year, and every death is registered. This is when provisions are allotted to mankind, and all their deeds and actions are gathered up.’

“‘O Messenger of Allāh,’ said I (‘Ā’ishā ﷺ), ‘Will no one enter Paradise except by the mercy of Allāh?’ ‘No one will enter Paradise except by the mercy of Allāh,’ he told me, Allāh bless him and give him peace. ‘Not even you?’ I asked. ‘Not even I,’ said he, Allāh bless him and give him peace, ‘unless Allāh ﷻ envelops me with His mercy.’ Then he rubbed his hand over his head and his face.”

The Prophet ﷺ is reported as saying:

“Jibrīl ﷺ came to me on the night of mid-Sha‘bān and said to me: ‘Oh Muḥammad, raise your head heavenwards!’

“I asked him: ‘What night is this?’ and he replied: ‘This is the night when Allāh ﷻ opens three hundred of the gates of mercy, forgiving all who do not make anything His partner.’

“He ﷺ said, ‘When it is the Night of mid-Sha‘bān, the gates of the seventh sky are opened and at every gate stand angels who seek forgiveness for the Muslims and every Muslim is forgiven except one who is established in committing a grave sin.’

“He ﷺ said, ‘Allāh ﷻ looks upon His slaves on the night of mid-Sha‘bān and forgives His servants (or those who are involved in worship) except for two [types]: someone who bears malice and a murderer.’” Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad* and at-Tirmidhi.

May Allāh ﷻ bless us all with His forgiveness on that night.

Rajab with its blessings has left you O friend
and it has witnessed the truth that you had not performed
And now half of Sha‘bān is gone
while you are in a state which I cannot fathom
hasten to do good deeds before you lose it
beware of the coming of death as it (*Nisfu-sh-Sha‘bān*) leaves us
how many people who spend the night wishing
whereas the note of death has been erased therefrom
wake up on this night of mid-Sha‘bān and pray
witness this month by observing the night of its mid-month
Fast during the day for the sake of Allāh and hope for His rewards
may you, by His *Lutf*, be successful on the day of the presentation.



I have collected these various ḥadīth and sayings (and there are many many more) because of the need for people to find some of them gathered together as there is a great deal of controversy, mainly on the part of “neo-salafis”, surrounding the month of Sha‘bān and the practice of praying on the night of mid-Sha‘bān.

In fact the modern usage of the term “Salafi” was revived as a slogan and movement, among latter-day Muslims, by the followers of Muḥammad ‘Abduh (the student of Jamal al-Dīn ‘al-Afḡhānī’ and underwritten by the British Intelligence Service) some thirteen centuries after the Prophet ﷺ, a little over one hundred years ago.

Like similar movements that have historically appeared in Islam, its basic claim was that the religion had not been properly understood by anyone since the Prophet ﷺ and the early Muslims – and most importantly – themselves.

This controversy is mainly provoked by the neo-kharajites (from the Arabic *khawārij* خوارج, meaning literally “Those who Went Out”) or, perhaps one might more simply call them *deviants*, by which I mean the followers of Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab Najdi and his teacher ibn Taymiyya and their modern-day counterparts ranging from Muhammad Nasiruddīn al-Albani to °Abdul-Azīz Bin Bāz and including, contemporaneously, the likes of Ayman al-Zawahiri and his confederates in terror and indiscriminate murder.

This ongoing controversy financed, no doubt, by petrodollars and spread by the various media outlets those petrodollars support, has frightened many sincere modern Muslims into forgoing the blessings of this holy month lest they be guilty, if only in their own understanding, of *shirk* or reprehensible innovation (*bid'ah*/بدعة).

As we have tried to make clear, the prayers of mid-Sha°bān are not a *sunnah* but rather they are *nafl* and, as such, entirely voluntary and so redound to the benefit (°*ajr*) of those who practice them.

Clearly there is no limit to ṣalāt and no limit to the blessings which come to one as a result of performing ṣalāt (except, of course, at restricted times such as after Fajr and before *shurūk ash-shams* or after °Asr and before Maghrib).

As for the fasting in Sha°bān, that clearly is a well established sunnah, the only difference among the scholars being how much and when to fast and when not to fast.

No doubt there are some practices, mainly having to do with fireworks and the lighting of candles, which are *bid'ah*, but these are mainly cultural atavisms left over from pre-Islāmic times. We have nothing to with them, do not advocate them and advise Muslims to stay clear of any such practices and their likes.



Hopefully our intentions are clear to the listener/reader and that it is obvious that praying 10 or 20 or 30 or 100 or even 1,000 *rukū'a* (ركوع) can only be of benefit to the one who does them, so I would like to speak a bit about the spiritual realities of the Niṣfu Sha°bān.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا
 وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا
 هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُم
 مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ۚ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا

yāā-ʾayyuha-l-ladhīna ʾāmanu-dh-kuru-llāha dhikrañ kathīrā
 wa sabbiḥūhu bukratañw-wa ʾaṣilā
 huaw-l-ladhū-yuṣalli ʿalaykum wa malāʾikatuhū li-yukhrijakum
 mina-dhū-dhulumati ʾila-n-nūr: wa kāna bi-l-muʾminīna raḥīma

Oh you who believe!

Remember Allāh with abundant Remembrance
 and glorify Him in the morning and in the evening.

It is He who blesses you, and His Angels,
 that He might bring you forth from the darkness to the light,
 and He is Singularly Compassionate to the Believers.

(Sūrah al-ʾAḥzāb 33:41-43)



يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ
 ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً
 فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي
 وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي

yāā ʾayyutuha-n-nafsu-l-muṭmaʾinnah
 irjiʿi ila rabbika raḍiyatam-marḍiyyah
 fa-dkḥulī fī ʿibadī
 wa-dkḥulī jannatī

Oh you whose self (*nafs*) is at peace.
 Return to your Sustainer pleased and well pleasing.
 So enter among My worshippers.

Enter My Garden.

(Sūrah al-Fajr 89:27-30)

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ
أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

°al-ladhīna °āmanū wa taṭāma°innu qulubuhum bi-dhikri-llāh;
°alā bi-dhikri-llāhi taṭāma°innu-l-qulūbā

Those who believe and whose hearts are made tranquil
by the Remembrance of Allāh;

Surely in the Remembrance of Allāh do hearts find rest.

(Sūrah ar-Ra°d 13:28)



It is in °āyāt like these that we find the real reason for devoting our time, which is our lives, to the Remembrance of Allāh ﷻ and what else is the ṣalāt but Remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.

Also in the Ḥadīth Qudsī, when Allāh ﷻ speaks on the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ, we find similar reminders:

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah ؓ from the Prophet ﷺ, who narrated that Allāh ﷻ says:

“The first of his actions for which a servant of Allāh will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayers. If they are in order, then he will have prospered and succeeded: and if they are wanting, then he will have failed and lost. If there is something defective in his obligatory prayers, the Lord ﷻ will say: ‘See if My servant has any supererogatory (*nafl*) prayers with which may be completed that which was defective in his obligatory prayers. Then the rest of his actions will be judged in like fashion.’” (It was related by at-Tirmidhi and also by Abu Dawud, an-Nasa’i, Ibn Majah and Aḥmad).

or consider this:

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah ؓ from the Prophet ﷺ, who narrated that Allāh ﷻ says:

“Our Lord ﷻ descends each night to the earth’s sky when there remains the final third of the night, and He says: Who is saying a prayer to Me that I may answer it? Who is asking something of Me that I may give it him? Who is asking forgiveness of Me that I may forgive him?”

(It was related by al-Bukhari and also by Muslim, Malik, at-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawūd).

In a version by Muslim the Ḥadīth ends with the words:

“And thus He continues till [the light of] dawn shines.”

Or finally consider this well known Ḥadīth Qudsī:

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه from the Prophet ﷺ, that when Allāh ﷻ spoke on his tongue He ﷻ said;

“Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him (*farḍ*), and if My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory (*nafl*) works then I shall love him. And when I love him I am the hearing by which he hears, his seeing by which he sees, the hand by which he strikes and the foot by which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him. (It was related by al-Bukhārī.)



From both the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth we can see the tremendous benefits and rewards (*‘ajr*) that come from the free and gratuitous acts of the sincere remembrancer and worshipper of Allāh ﷻ.

How is it, we wonder, that there are people, fellow Muslims, who would turn such acts into actions which are *bid‘ah* and in the process deprive themselves of so many blessings?

Dr. Seyyed Ḥossein Naṣr writes on *The Interior Life in Islam*:

“The function of religion is to bestow order upon human life and to establish an ‘outward’ harmony upon whose basis man can return inwardly to his Origin by means of the journey toward the ‘interior’ direction. This universal function is especially true of Islam, this last religion of humanity, which is at once a Divine injunction to establish order in human society and within the human soul and at the same time to make possible the interior life, to prepare the soul to return unto its Lord and enter the Paradise which is none other than the Divine Beatitude.

“Allah is at once the First (*al-awwal*) and the Last (*al-ʾākhir*), the Outward (*adḥ-ḍḥahir*) and the Inward (*al-batin*). By function of His outwardness He creates a world of separation and otherness and through His inwardness He brings men back to their Origin. Religion is the means whereby this journey is made possible, and it recapitulates in its structure the creation itself which issues from Allah and returns unto Him. Religion consists of a dimension which is outward and another which, upon the basis of this outwardness, leads to the inward. These dimensions of the ʾIslāmīc revelation are called the Ṣharīʿah (the Sacred Law), the Ṭarīqah (the Path) and the Ḥaqīqah (the Truth), or from another point of view they correspond to ʾislām, ʾimān, and ʾihsān, or “surrender”, “faith” and “virtue”.

“Although the whole of the Qurʾānic revelation is called “ʾislām”, from the perspective in question here it can be said that not all those who follow the tradition on the level of ʾislām are *muʾminūn*, namely those who possess ʾimān [faith], nor do all those who are *muʾminūn* possess ʾihsān, which is at once virtue and beauty and by function of which man is able to penetrate into the inner meaning of religion. The ʾIslāmīc revelation is meant for all human beings destined to follow this tradition. But not all men are meant to follow the interior path. It is enough for a man to have lived according to the Ṣharīʿah and in surrender (ʾislām) to the Divine Will to die in grace and to enter into Paradise. But there are those who yearn for the Divine here and now and whose love for Allāh and propensity for the contemplation of the Divine Realities (*al-ḥaqāʾiq*) compel them to seek the path of inwardness. The revelation also provides a path for such men, for men who through their ʾimān and ʾihsān “return unto their Lord pleased and well pleasing” while still walking upon the earth.”

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي • وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

fa-dkḥulī fī ʿibadī • wa-dkḥulī jannatī

Enter among My worshippers • Enter My Garden.

(al-Fajr 89:29-30)

What most people don’t really understand is that the command of Allāh ﷻ to enter the Garden is not given in the future but in the present. In the Arabic language this is a command (*faʿil amr*) that, while it does not preclude the future, is made in the present tense.

This is a huge understanding, and it is an understanding which for the most part completely eludes the neo-kharajites for whom everything is necessarily either in the distant past or the far future.

In their thinking the Garden is something reserved for the martyrs (*shāhid*) and the rest of us will have to wait for the Yawm al-Qiyyamah when we may or may not be admitted into it.

Those who grasp the *ḥaqiqah* understand that there is a Garden in the world (*dunyā*/دُنْيَا) that is entirely accessible in the here and now.

Allāh makes this clear in the following *ʾāyāt*:

فَضْرَبَ بَيْنَهُمْ سُورًا لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ

fa-ḍariba baynahum bi-sūril-lahu bābum-
bāṭinuhu fihi-r-raḥmatu wa ḍhāhiruhu min qibalīhi-l-adḥabā

and a wall shall be set up between them in which is a gate on the inside of it — mercy — and on the outside of it — suffering.
(Sūratu-l-Ḥadīd 57:13)

and Allāh ﷻ further says in Sūrah Yā Sīn when speaking about the reward for the man who came running from the furthest end of the city testifying to the Truth of the Messengers:

قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ ۖ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ
بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ
بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

qīla-dā-kḥuli-l-jannah ; qāla yālayta qowmī ya°lamūn (a)
bimā ḡḥafara lī-rabbī wa ja°alanī mina-l-mukramin. •

He was told, “Enter the Garden!”

He said, “Would that my people knew —

how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored.”

(Sūrah Yā Sīn 36:20-26)

...if people only understood on the deep level that our *ṣalāt*, though in one way is for Allāh ﷻ, in reality is a means for our own selves.

As the Prophet ﷺ spoke about the man who had a stream running in front of his house and took a bath in it five times a day would in the end find himself cleansed.

So this is the effect of the *ṣalāt* upon us. It cleanses, it purifies, it changes and perfects in ways we can't even imagine.

We couple this with a Night that has been known for centuries to traditional Muslims as the Night of Forgiveness and the Night of Emancipation; as the Night when all sin is forgiven; when Allāh ﷻ writes the destinies of all people for the coming year by taking into account the deeds committed by them in the past; when there are even those who believe that the Prophet ﷺ visits each house and relieves the pains of suffering humanity.

It this true? Does it matter?

We believe that the Prophet ﷺ is alive and with us, only we don't know exactly how in line with the saying of Allāh ﷻ:

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ

wa la taqūlu li-mañy-yuqtalu fī sabīli-llāhi ʿamwāt;

bal ʾahyāuñw-wa lakin la tashʿurūn

do not say that those who are slain in in the way of Allāh are dead
they are living but you do not know how.

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:154)

Admittedly the Rasūl ﷺ was not slain in the way of Allāh ﷻ, but if those slain in way of Allāh ﷻ are living, what then of the one ﷺ who lived his whole life in the way of Allāh ﷻ. How could he ﷺ not be living even if we do not know how?

In short whether you call it Shāb-e-baraat or Nişfu Şāʿbān or Laylat-tul Duʿāʾ or Nim Şābʿān or Berat Kandili or The Night of Forgiveness and Emancipation it makes little or no difference in truth.

What is for sure is that it is an opportunity and only fools forsake opportunities when they are offered. Again what does it matter, in truth, if you pray 10 or 50 or 100 rakʿat. The only reward for such is the blessings and pleasure of Allāh ﷻ so do not loose the chance.

As for fasting in Şāʿbān I trust in reviewing the numerous ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīṡ we have mentioned all Muslims will take the opportunity to follow what is clearly an established sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.



We ask the forgiveness of Allāh ﷻ if we have said anything wrong and rejoice in the blessing of Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ for all that we have said that brings anyone closer to the Truth and to attaining the Garden in this life and in the final life. And surely Allāh ﷻ knows best what is true and what is not.

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